

Message Text

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AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 7813

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GR

SUBJECT: POLITICS RETURN FROM SUMMER VACATION

1. GREEK POLITICAL LIFE AWOKE FROM THE SUMMER DOLDRUMS THIS WEEK. PARLIAMENT RECONVENED ITS SECOND FULL SESSION OCTOBER 6, AND OTHER POLITICAL FORCES BEGAN TO STIR PUBLICLY FOLLOWING THE LONG SUMMER VACATION.

2. THE NEWLY CONMENED PARLIAMENT PROCEEDED QUICKLY TO ITS FIRST TASK: THE ELECTION OF OFFICERS. NOT SURPRISINGLY, PRIME MINISTER CONSTANTINE CARAMANLIS' NEW DEMOCRACY PARTY, WITH ITS WHOPPING MAJORITY IN THE PARLIAMENT, SWEPT THE ELECTIONS: CONSTANTINOS PAPACONSTANTINOOU WAS REELECTED PRESIDENT (BY 212 VOTES AGAINST 50 FOR THE CU/NF CANDIDATE, 13 FOR THE PASOK CANDIDATE AND 9 BLANK BALLOTS); GEORGIOS STAMATIS WAS REELECTED FIRST VICE PRESIDENT; AND DIMITRIOS ALIPRANTIS AND ELIAS PAPAILIOU WERE CHOSEN SECOND AND THIRD VICE PRESIDENTS RESPECTIVELY. (UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION THE PARLIAMENT'S OFFICERS ARE ELECTED FOR THE PARLIAMENT'S FULL TERM RATHER THAN JUST FOR THIS SESSION AS WAS THE CASE PREVIOUSLY.)

3. THIS OTHERWISE DULL AND PREDICTABLE ELECTION GENERATED IMMEDIATE AND CONTINUING INTEREST WHEN FIVE
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CENTER UNION/NEW FORCES (CU/NF) DEPUTIES BROKE PARTY

RANKS, AND REFUSED TO VOTE FOR THE CU/NF CANDIDATE PAA ALEXANDER BALTATZIS--FOR PARLIAMENT PRESIDENT. THREE OF THE DISSIDENTS OBVIOUSLY CAST THEIR SECRET BALLOTS FOR PAPAConstantinou AND TWO CAST BLANK BALLOTS (ALONG WITH THE DEPUTIES OF THE TWO COMMUNIST PARTIES).

4. OBVIOUSLY PIQUED BY THE BREACH IN PARTY DISCIPLINE, PARTY LEADER GEORGE MAVROS CONVOKED HIS PARLIAMENTARY COLLEAGUES IN SECRET SESSION OCTOBER 8, REPORTEDLY SEEKING TO DISCOVER WHO THE FIVE CULPRITS WERE AND TO IMPRESS ON ALL THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING A SOLID PARTY RONT. WHILE MOST CU/NF DEPUTIES SEEM TO BE TRYING PUBLICLY TO MINIMIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BREAKAWAYS--ATTRIBUTING THEM TO "PERSONAL BITTERNESS"--CU/NF OPPONENTS ON BOTH THE RIGHT AND THE LEFT ARE QUITE NATURALLY SEEKING TO MAGNIFY THEIR SIGNIFICANCE. MEANWHILE, A THREE-MAN TEAM HAS BEEN APPOINTED TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE MATTER.

5. ON ANOTHER FRONT, WHATEVER COMFORT ANDREAS PAPANDREOU MIGHT HAVE FELT AT THE TROUBLES OF THE CENTER UNION/NEW FORCES MUST HAVE BEEN CONSIDERABLY DIMINISHED WHEN THE GROUP HE THREW OUT OF PASOK A FEW MONTHS AGO CONVOKED A PRESS CONFERENCE ON OCTOBER 8 AND WHAT THEY SAID INDICATES THAT THEY WILL CONTINUE TO BE A THORN IN HIS SIDE. THE DISSIDENTS--CALLING THEIR GROUP TEMPORARILY "THE SOCIALIST MARCH"--ONCE AGAIN LAMBASTED ANDREAS FOR HIS ATTEMPTS TO MAKE PASOK INTO HIS PERSONAL VEHICLE. THEY STATED THAT THEY WILL HOLD A MEETING IN NOVEMBER AND THAT THEY INTEND EVENTUALLY TO FOUND THEIR OWN TRULY MARXIST/SOCIALIST PARTY.

6. FINALLY, THE MONARCHISTS, HAVING KEPT THEIR HEADS DOWN FOR NEARLY A YEAR NOW, ARE BECOMING MORE ACTIVE PUBLICLY. A MONARCHIST ORGANIZATION, DUBBED THE "ROYAL UNION", DEDICATED ITS ATHENS OFFICES ON OCTOBER 8, AND HAS CIRCULATED ITS OWN PERIODICAL. SEVERAL OTHER MONARCHIST PERIODICALS HAVE ALSO APPEARED RECENTLY. OF PARTICULAR INTEREST, IN ONE OF THESE A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE SHAH OF IRAN WAS PROMINENTLY PLACED AND THE PERIODICAL'S CONFIDENTIAL

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SOLE ADVERTISEMENT WAS FROM IRAN'S NATIONAL AIRLINE.

7. THE FOREGOING ARE ONLY THE BEGINNING OF AN INTENSE POLITICAL PERIOD IN ATHENS--BOTH ON INTERNAL AND INTERNATIONAL MATTERS. ARCHBISHOP MAKARIOS IS EXPECTED HERE ON FRIDAY FOR TALKS WITH PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS (WHO RETURNS FROM LONDON ON SATURDAY) AND OTHER GREEK POLITICAL LEADERS. ON WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15, THE

PRIME MINISTER WILL DELIVER A REPORT TO THE PARLIAMENT ON
INTERNAL AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, FOLLOWED BY
STATEMENTS BY THE LEADERS OF THE OPPOSITION PARTIES. THE
SUREST CONCLUSION FROM ALL THIS IS THAT POLITICS ARE
VERY MUCH ALIVE AND WELL IN ATHENS.
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